



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



World  
Heritage  
Convention

# Marine World Heritage:

## Safeguarding the Crown Jewels of the Ocean

The *1972 World Heritage Convention* is founded on the premise that certain places on our planet are of Outstanding Universal Value and as such should form part of the common heritage of humankind. On a planet of over 70% ocean, a huge amount of our heritage is located in marine areas.

Today, 46 sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List specifically in recognition of their exceptional marine values.



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## WHAT IS MARINE WORLD HERITAGE?



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Unique places as the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador, Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in the Philippines, among others, make up the world's marine heritage.

These sites are recognized for their exceptional natural phenomena, their geological processes, ecological functioning and/or outstanding biodiversity found nowhere else on the planet.

# The World Heritage Marine Programme

Launched in 2005, the mission of the World Heritage Marine Programme is to establish effective conservation of existing and potential marine areas of Outstanding Universal Value to make sure they will be maintained and thrive for generations to come.

## What do we want to achieve over the next 10 years?

Over the next 10 years, marine World Heritage aims to achieve three major goals:

- 1 World Heritage marine sites managed effectively** to maintain their Outstanding Universal Value, using contemporary management approaches;
- 2 An international network of World Heritage marine sites** reflecting a representative selection of all major marine ecosystems of the world;
- 3 A marine World Heritage site managers network** that serves as a driver for change in ocean conservation globally.

## 1 World Heritage marine sites managed effectively

World Heritage marine sites share similar conservation challenges but simultaneously hold a wealth of information about good and best practices in dealing with them. While some sites are well managed and deal with threats adequately, others lack the capacity to do so. Bringing these success stories together, in ways that make them suitable for replication in other marine areas, is one of the central pieces of work where a clear and univocal added value can be delivered. The work of the World Heritage Centre's Marine Programme has allowed it to accumulate a tremendous amount of knowledge about sites, compiled over multiple years. It is today, in many respects, uniquely positioned to develop a set of best practice examples and to promote them so they will be replicated and benefit other marine World Heritage sites around the world.



## 2 An international network of World Heritage marine sites

Today, 46 marine sites are inscribed on the World Heritage List. They cover a vast range of ecosystem types in both tropical and temperate ocean areas. While mangroves, coral reefs and saltmarshes are relatively well represented among the network of marine sites on the World Heritage List, others are not. A recent, preliminary stock take indicated nine major marine gaps on the World Heritage List. The Arctic Realm might be of special interest. Nearly no World Heritage sites exist anywhere along the vast and distinct Arctic coastlines but this region contains many exceptional marine features.

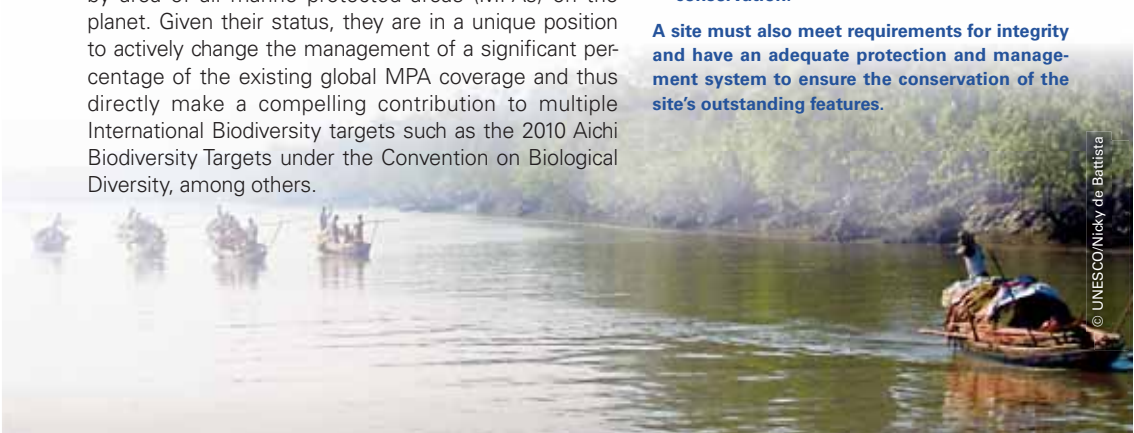
## 3 World Heritage site managers as drivers for change

Marine World Heritage sites cover about one quarter by area of all marine protected areas (MPAs) on the planet. Given their status, they are in a unique position to actively change the management of a significant percentage of the existing global MPA coverage and thus directly make a compelling contribution to multiple International Biodiversity targets such as the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity, among others.

World Heritage sites are protected through the *1972 World Heritage Convention*. They are selected through a rigorous, multi-year nomination, evaluation and inscription process. A World Heritage marine site must respond to at least one of the following natural criteria:

1. **Superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;**
2. **Outstanding examples of major stages in the earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going processes in the development of landforms or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;**
3. **Outstanding examples of significant, ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and plant and animal communities, and**
4. **The most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including threatened species that are considered of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.**

**A site must also meet requirements for integrity and have an adequate protection and management system to ensure the conservation of the site's outstanding features.**



## List of sites

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### **ARGENTINA**

Península Valdés, 1999

### **AUSTRALIA**

Great Barrier Reef, 1981  
Heard and McDonald Islands, 1997  
Macquarie Island, 1997  
Ningaloo Coast, 2011  
Shark Bay, Western Australia, 1991

### **BANGLADESH**

The Sundarbans, 1997

### **BELIZE**

Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, 1996

### **BRAZIL**

Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves, 2001

### **CANADA/USA**

Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Alsek, 1979

### **COLOMBIA**

Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary, 2006

### **COSTA RICA**

Area de Conservación Guanacaste, 1999  
Cocos Island National Park, 1997

### **ECUADOR**

Galápagos Islands, 1978

### **FINLAND/SWEDEN**

High Coast/Kvarken Archipelago, 2000

### **FRANCE**

Gulf of Porto: Calanche of Piana, Gulf of Girolata, Scandola Reserve, 1983  
Lagoons of New Caledonia: Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems, 2008

### **GERMANY/NETHERLANDS**

The Wadden Sea, 2009

### **ICELAND**

Surtsey, 2008

### **INDIA**

Sundarbans National Park, 1987

### **INDONESIA**

Komodo National Park, 1991  
Ujung Kulon National Park, 1991

### **JAPAN**

Ogasawara Islands, 2011  
Shiretoko, 2005

### **KIRIBATI**

Phoenix Islands Protected Area, 2010

### **MAURITANIA**

Banc d'Arguin National Park, 1989

### **MEXICO**

Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California, 2005  
Sian Ka'an, 1987  
Whale Sanctuary of El Vizcaino, 1993

### **NEW ZEALAND**

New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands, 1998

### **NORWAY**

West Norwegian Fjords - Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord, 2005

### **PALAU**

Rock Islands Southern Lagoon, 2012

### **PANAMA**

Coiba National Park and its Special Zone of Marine Protection, 2005

### **PHILIPPINES**

Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park, 1999  
Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, 1993

### **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Natural System of Wrangel Island Reserve, 2004

### **SEYCHELLES**

Aldabra Atoll, 1982

### **SOLOMON ISLANDS**

East Rennell, 1998

### **SOUTH AFRICA**

iSimangaliso Wetland Park, 1999

### **SPAIN**

Ibiza, Biodiversity and Culture, 1999

### **UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

Gough and Inaccessible Islands, 1995  
St Kilda, 1986

### **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Everglades National Park, 1979  
Papahānaumokuākea, 2010

### **VIET NAM**

Ha Long Bay, 1994

### **YEMEN**

Socotra Archipelago, 2008

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